

**ACS TEACHING WITH TECHNOLOGY FELLOWSHIP  
PROJECT PROPOSAL**

“*Yavanika*: Integrating Asian Theatre into Theatre Studies Through Streaming Video”

David Mason  
Department of Theatre, Rhodes College  
901 . 843 . 3936  
masond@rhodes.edu

The *Yavanika* project intends to make available on the Internet a wide variety of video recordings of theatrical performances in Asian countries as video “streams” video clips which play over the Internet, not as downloadable files, but as on demand “broadcasts”. The video material will be accessible to ACS institutions and other registered users, making possible on demand use of this video material in Internet ready classrooms and elsewhere.

***1. Background***

The primary problem for the academic study of theatrical performance is access. The problem of access to theatrical performances affects the way Western theatre is studied, and affects to an even greater degree the diversification of theatre curricula. Inaccessibility greatly limits the extent to which theatre courses can include the study of theatre traditions in Japan, China, India, Indonesia, Korea, and elsewhere, which carry significant literary, musical, and religious heritages.

While in some ways video is an inadequate substitute for student travel to the several countries where such traditions continue, video may yet be the best alternative, providing as it does a degree of visual and aural representation of which both lectures and textbooks are incapable. But traditionally distributed video has its own difficulties. Commercial video recordings commonly concentrate on a few, “mainstream” forms, such as Japan’s *kabuki* and China’s *xiqu*, leaving other forms of great cultural value India’s *ramlila* and Indonesia’s *wayang*, for example on the margins of study. Furthermore, commercial video packages having to do with Asian theatre are often prohibitively expensive.

It is possible, however, to transmit video effectively and inexpensively via the Internet. And, given the ever increasing number of “smart classrooms” on college campuses those classrooms with Internet access and video projection capabilities the Internet offers itself as a means by which courses can include a more direct experience of theatrical performance. Additionally, providing video via streaming, which does not require downloading of individual and large files, increases accessibility and serves copyright interests.

## **2. Description**

This project includes at least four phases. First, the acquisition of the requisite hardware, including a DVD/VHS player, and a computer which can be configured as a Web server and as a streaming server, and which can capture and process both digital and analog video. Second, the development of the Web Site serving as the catalog of and interface for the video material. Third, the acquisition and processing of video material. Fourth, the outreach activities of the project.

The third and fourth phases of the project constitute the ongoing labor of the project. The third phase entails networking with scholars engaged in research in the various individual forms of performance in Asia, who can provide video for the project, collecting the material by mail and otherwise, and obtaining usage permission from individual artists. The fourth phase includes the work necessary to introduce the project to ACS institutions and to develop guidelines for using the Site and integrating its content with course curricula. The project also anticipates the potential need for an editorial board.

## **3. Timeline**

*May 15, 2005:* Purchase of hardware

*June 15:* Project Web Site becomes publicly accessible and fully functional

*July 28:* Collection of potential video material at annual Association for Theatre in Higher Education

*August 15:* Project announcements to relevant programs at all ACS institutions

## **4. Technology**

*Hardware:* G5 Macintosh Computer, VHS Player

*Software:* Final Cut Xpress video editing software, Quicktime Pro, Quicktime Streaming Server

## **5. Other Support**

Towards the location of the content of the project's Web Site, the project expects to work closely with the scholars and artists who are members of the Association for Asian Performance, an incorporated nonprofit organization based in the United States for which the initiator of this project serves as a board member.

## **6. Learning Outcomes**

The *Yavanika* project makes it possible for students in theatre studies, music, religious studies, literature, and international and interdisciplinary studies programs to see and hear the performance forms their courses are concerned with. On account of this project, students can develop an understanding of and appreciation for artistic practice based not only on lectures and textual descriptions enhanced by photographs, but on a more direct,

personal experience of the art in practice.

### **7. Curriculum**

In many ways, the *Yavanika* project will act as a library resource, and will assist the design of courses and lectures in a flexible way. Living on the Internet, the video material will be always available, allowing professors to access it at any point during a given lecture, and at any point in a given semester. Students will also be able to access this video material outside of class, freeing up more class time for analysis and discussion, and providing for students another resource for study. A professor teaching Theatre History, for instance, might facilitate the study of Indian theatre by using video clips of contemporary *Kathakali* and *Kudiyattam* to illustrate a discussion of the continuity and change of aesthetics from the days of classical Sanskrit drama. A religious studies course might use the same clips to examine some ways in which spaces are sanctified.

### **8. Assessment**

The *Yavanika* Web Site itself will include computer scripts to track the usage of the site, including the specific files accessed, the specific numbers and locations of users, times of day at which traffic at the Site is heavy, and so forth. The Site will also include a registration system which will help to identify the ACS professors who make special use of the project. The Site will also include an online discussion forum through which the project will seek to engage professors and students in an active and ongoing evaluation of the nature and usefulness of the project. During the summer following the first year of the project 2006 , the statistics and discussion data will be used to assess the usefulness and effectiveness of the project, and to make appropriate changes.

### **9. Collaboration and Dissemination**

On account of copyright and financial issues, the project will rely on the participation of scholars who are producing video material as a part of their field research in Asian theatre. The project expects to work closely with members of the Association for Asian Performance, and will seek out ACS faculty who may be able to contribute. Depending on usage, demand, and growth of the project, the Site's statistics and online discussions may also be employed after the first year of the project to identify ACS faculty and other scholars in relevant fields who could contribute to the development of the Site's content in the role of an editorial board.

As a matter of dissemination, apart from the issue of publicizing the project, portions of the *Yavanika* Site will necessarily be restricted to registered users, which may include institutions as well as particular individuals. These restrictions will make possible the use of video of performers requiring some limitations on the distribution of and access to their work.